# LABOUR MONTHLY

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Editor: R. Palme Dutt

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## Election Prospects

R.P.D. examines the Tory black record and some problems in the fight for an alternative programme

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## Shop Stewards Today

A leading shop stewards' convener, Bill Warman, answers the unprincipled attacks

**THE SUICIDE CLUB**
Ivor Montagu on Bertrand Russell's peace plan

**COVERTIBILITY AND AFTER**
By J. R. Campbell

**AFRICA AWAKENED**
W. E. B. DuBois greets the Accra Conference

**A MEMOIR OF G. D. H. COLE**
By R. Page Arnot

*And articles on* THE SUDAN; *more experiences in a* CHINESE COMMUNE; *and* CHARLES DARWIN

FEBRUARY · 1959

One Shilling and Sixpence

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# FLAG FLAP

WAVING over the Tower of London on January 18 was a revolutionary flag. More startling still, it flew beside the royal standard marking the Queen's birthday. Wildest rumours spread; when even the garrison became aware of it, the father of all flaps began. The mayor of the Tower, panicking off to strike it himself, took a wrong turning to the ramparts in his zeal. When he got there, the flagpole was bare; clearly, an inside job! After a general alarm and a diligent search, the culprit was found, with the revolutionary flag of defiance hidden in his bed. When this became known, the 17-year-old son of the Tower's deputy chaplain and a confederate were expelled from the Merchant Taylors' School as 'young men of dangerous principles'. On February 5 the appeal against expulsion was rejected by outraged City Fathers and the whole school granted a holiday 'to reward and confirm the spirit of loyalty they had displayed'—by *not* hanging out revolutionary flags, presumably. The delighted boys presented an address 'expressive of their abhorrence of all seditious and republican principles'. What happened to the three yards' long silken tricolour of the French Republic when that flap in 1796 had died down, and whether the boys fulfilled their early promise, I don't know. But any disquieted Old Merchant Taylor may rest assured that they were neither recruits to the Young Communist League (founded in August, 1922) nor readers of LABOUR MONTHLY (founded a year earlier in July, 1921). I offer this commemoration 163 years later for cheerful consideration by younger readers, and will wager they will find L.M. the only journal celebrating it. (Youth papers, please copy.)

I count amongst the younger generation a valued American reader, who writes spiritedly as ever, about our references to Robert Owen: 'Believe it or not, I have a slight personal relationship with him. Hugh Owen Pentecost was born in Harmony, a kind of Socialist village founded by Owen in Indiana. A Baptist preacher, with a congregation too large to make it safe for orthodoxy, Pentecost was expelled from the church when he spoke in defence of the arrested Anarchists of the "Haymarket Riots" in Chicago, 1886. Later he practised law, "to keep the little fellows out of jail and put the big ones in". He had a large Sunday congregation for many years at Lyric Hall, New York City. I went regularly; for many a month I reported his speech fully, getting it published in the atheist weekly *The Truthseeker*, next Sunday. It was a labour of love. At the time it didn't seem very important; but looking back, in my ninety-third year, I wonder if it didn't help a little? Pentecost was finding his way to a Socialist solution; his congregation, largely of young people, eagerly followed him'. When reading this week William Morris' *Commonweal* of February, 1889, I found a correspondent exposing a much-boosted Supreme Court anti-Trust decision and quoting critical remarks by 'Hugh O. Pentecost, the brilliant seceder from the Protestant Church'. How near seem the 1796 schoolboy supporters of the French Revolution; Robert Owen, Hugh Pentecost and our American reader! How familiar, too, seem the people whom David Crook describes building their Commune in China, so much in the spirit of Owen's vision. chorus 'of asses, apes and dogs', of panoramic dumbells and bumbles, NATO-blindfolded 'liberal' journa-

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# NOTES OF THE MONTH

## 1. *Election Prospects*

KING Solomon is reported to have complained that there is no new thing under the sun. 'Is there anything whereof it may be said, See, this is new? It hath been already of old time, which was before us.' He had evidently not anticipated the new planet which socialism would place in the orbit of the sun.

Whenever the election comes —and we would not dream of entering into competition with the tipsters on the date—one thing can be said with certainty about it. However little the leaders of the Tory Party or of the Labour Party may enjoy the prospect, the next election will be held under the sign of the new planet. And not only in a physical sense.

The last time that an election was held in the midst of the manifest public demonstration of capitalist economic decline and socialist advance was in 1931. That contrast then found reflection in the downfall of the Second Labour Government, the collapse of the pound, and the final exposure and desertion of the principal leaders of the Labour Party, who had been the main champions of anti-communism. It found further expression in the upsurge of new left currents in the Labour Party, which during the ensuing de-

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The following sentence was omitted from last month's review by Clemens Dutt:

'There are a number of quotations from the *Labour Monthly* in the text, but curiously there is no mention of the journal in the bibliography.'

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cade came close, but not close enough, to victory for the aims of the united working class front, the popular front, British-Soviet unity against Hitler and the prevention of the second world war.

Today the situation is far more advanced. The stakes are higher. At that time the construction of a socialist economy had only begun with the First Five Year plan. The Soviet Union stood alone in a capitalist world. Today the socialist world includes over one-third of mankind. A further half of mankind, in the former colonial and dependent countries, or in the still subject countries, turn increasingly to the inspiration and hope of the new social order which ends forever the old Western colour-bar civilisation of racial domination and egoism, of illiteracy and poverty, and shows how to transform in the shortest time age-old backwardness into plenty. The superior economic strength, vitality and pace of advance, no less than of scientific and educational levels, of socialism, has been demonstrated, even by the admission of enemies, with an achievement already outstripping every capitalist country but one, and with the near prospect of living standards outstripping not only the vast majority of the peoples living under capitalism (this has already been accomplished) but even the highest standards of the most privileged metropolitan minority sectors of capitalist domination.

**Britain on the Eve of the Election**

And in Britain? What is the picture in Britain, now fifth in the order of industrial powers (soon to be sixth, when China fulfils its short-term aim) on the eve of the election? In Britain unemployment has reached the highest level since the war. The economic prospect is insecure and fills all with anxiety. New plans are announced for further cutting down the already fallen production in the main spheres of industry, in coal and steel. Arms expenditure in the United States rises to a new record height, at the same time as it decreases in the Soviet Union. The Sandys programme for Britain offers a corresponding prospect of increasing burdens in the mad drive to pose as a nuclear power. The war and repression in Cyprus drags on. Every constructive proposal of the Soviet Union and other socialist countries for a peaceful solution, whether over Berlin and Germany, disengagement in Europe, the Middle East, or the Far East, has been met with a Western: No! The lords of the old dying social order, conscious of their inferiority and approaching defeat in peaceful economic competition, still feverishly brandish the threat (although they now know that they

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are outclassed in this field also) to unloose the catastrophe of nuclear war. The hands of these madmen, centred in the United States, but with their main allies and accomplices still ruling Britain, have not yet been tied by the peoples. Such is the situation of Britain on the eve of the election. Can there be any doubt what are the great questions before the British people in the coming election?

**Problem of the Election**

How far will these great problems be adequately placed before the people for decision at the coming election? Here we come to the crucial problem of the election. It would be vain to look for any realist recognition of the grave situation of Britain in the world today—plunging downwards in contrast with the advance of socialism and even losing ground in comparison with capitalist competitors, and tied to a deadly cold war policy of nuclear suicide —in the blinkered official electoral programmes of the two dominant parties in the coming election. It would be vain to look in these programmes of the two ruling parties, between whom alone the electorate will have effective choice for the future Government, for any frank presentation of the true alternatives before the people of this country. This is the situation which gives rise to the key problem of the coming election.

**'Political Apathy'?**

It is this situation which gives rise to the universal complaints of 'political apathy'. These complaints should be addressed, not to the masses of the people or the electors who have shown again and again that they respond whenever there is a sign of a real fight, as at the moment of the Suez war, but to the top political leaders of parliament, the press and broadcasting, who do everything to kill genuine controversy, hide all facts that matter, and thereby deliberately manufacture the atmosphere of boredom with politics, cynicism, frivolous irresponsibility and fatalism characteristic of significant sections (even—most horrible and unnatural—among some sections of young people) in present-day Britain.

**Clear Away the Cant**

To face a problem is the first step to its solution. Nothing is to be gained by living in a world of illusion or endeavouring to paint before a sceptical and dwindling audience a sham fight between a

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Gaitskell and a Macmillan as a battle between St. George and the Dragon. All the elaborately devised and slickly presented penny bazaar assortments of wind-blown phrases and rival (in practice often remarkably similar) petty legislative tinkering offered as 'programmes' by the streamlined machines of the two dominant parties are no more than the conventional small-change huckstering of the routine electoral game. They bear little relation to the real gigantic questions which now arise before the British people and which require to be voiced in this election.

**Against Mugwumpery**

But what is the conclusion to be drawn by serious men and women from this situation? Is it to be the conclusion of the Mugwump? Indifference? 'A plague on both your houses'? Defeatism? Impotence? This would be to betray every democratic right, however limited, which has been won by the struggle of the people. It would be to play straight into the hands of reaction, which has set all its nets and snares to kill democracy in this country by more subtle means than the coup d'état. On the contrary. The indispensable political fight becomes all the sharper, to force the real serious issues before the people to the forefront, despite the limitations of the official electoral programme presented on behalf of the dominant leadership of the labour movement. It is essential to force them to the forefront, alike in the preparation of the election, during the election, and after the election.

**Fight for an Alternative Programme**

That is why the direct presentation of such an alternative programme, as in the constituencies where there are Communist candidates, despite the limitation of the scale, has a vital significance for the whole fight. This significance is not in isolation from the general fight, but as a part of the general fight over all the constituencies. The objective of the defeat of the Tory Government needs to be combined with the fight for an effective alternative programme. The battle for the aims of the working class, of the widest sections of the people, of all supporters of peace, needs to be conducted in every field, alike on the industrial and the political field, alike in the election and after the election, in order to compel changes of policy in Britain. The coming election will represent a political high water mark in this battle.

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**Limited Democracy**

It is true that the ancient electoral mechanism of the Anglo-American constitutional system (nowadays consciously copied in countries where, as in France under De Gaulle and Soustelle, reaction aims to thwart democratic expression) offers at best a very distorting mirror for the popular will. All the most important decisions of the state, determining the future of the nation, are never submitted to electoral decision. The Government responsible for Munich, which by assisting Hitler's aggression made the second world war inevitable, was elected on a programme of collective resistance to fascist aggression. The cold war was initiated after an election of pledged support to British-Soviet co-operation. The surrender of Britain to American armed occupation, as a pawn for destruction in a future war, was never submitted to the electorate. And so all along the line. The normal permitted function for the electorate in this peculiar system is to express anger and dissatisfaction by turning out from office the existing incumbent of the two alternative governmental teams, which bicker ferociously over details, but which close up in unity for the maintenance of all the fundamentals of the constitution, the monarchy, the empire, the cold war, anti-communism and the general protection of the sacred rights of rent, interest and profits.

**Turn Them Out**

But even this limited function of turning out a hated reactionary government has its importance, although alone and by itself such a negative vote could be but a weak and poor expression of the positive aims of the popular will. The recent American Congressional elections have illustrated the significance of the marked swing in the general vote against the Republicans (and against some of the more reactionary Democrats) as helping to prepare the way for the new political climate of opinion in the United States, with the growth in the strength of the forces demanding a realignment of American policy—a new political climate revealed in the reception by all sections except the State Department to Mikoyan. But in the urgent present situation of Britain much more needs to be achieved in this election.

**Towards a Different Future**

And much more can be achieved, provided the battle is waged with the full strength of the working class movement. The initiative needs to come from below. The fight against the Tory Government

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needs to be combined with the fight against the reflection of Tory policy within the labour movement. The just anger against the Tory Government and the disastrous consequence of its policies must be kindled and directed to the aim of a different future for Britain, free from the nightmares of the cold war, colonial wars, the arms race and chronic economic crisis, and advancing in unison with socialist countries and newly independent nations along the road of peaceful co-existence, economic and social reconstruction and the transition to socialism.

## 2. *Black Record*

What did the Conservative Government offer in its election manifesto of 1955, four years ago? 'The British Empire and Commonwealth is the greatest force for peace in the world today.' Within the next year the same Government had launched the criminal aggression of the Suez war, condemned by opinion throughout the world and ending in ignominious fiasco. In swift succession followed wars in Oman, Aden, Cyprus and the invasion of Jordan. 'During the coming 25 years to double the standard of living' (a cheap promise, since they knew that in 25 years none of them would be there to answer for it). The Cohen Austerity Report to stiffen the fight against wage increases has provided the answer of practice to that profession.

### More from the Manifestos of 1955

'A property-owning democracy.' The numbers on National Assistance have risen to two and a half millions (what in a less mealy-mouthed era used to be called the 'growth of pauperism'). 'Expanding Economy.' They have succeeded in contracting the economy. 'Continued full employment . . . our record speaks for itself . . . every one in a job.' The unemployed total of 532,000 at the end of 1958 exceeded even the previous post-war peak of 480,000 in 1947. In face of this outcome of four years of diametrical divergence between professions and practice it may be worth recalling what the Communist Party Election Manifesto of 1955 declared: 'The Tories have called an early general election because they realise that their policy is leading to a slump'. The outcome of these four years has confirmed this prediction.

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**Hour of Reckoning**

Now the hour is approaching when the Guilty Men of Suez and the Slump will have to face the verdict of the electorate. Seldom has any Government of recent years presented such a record of a succession of unmitigated disasters, defeats and disrepute. After all their braggadocio over the Suez aggression, incurring the hatred and obloquy of the world, they now have to admit in practice that every aspect of that adventure was based on miscalculation, and they have to crawl back to come to terms with the Nasser they reviled on conditions reported to include surrender of their claim to £50 million compensation for the Canal Zone base and equipment in return for waiving of the claim for £20 million reparations for the damage done by their aggression to Port Said. Cyprus they have turned into a bloodstained nightmare. In Cuba they backed a losing tyrant with arms, even after the United States had been months before spry enough to read the writing on the wall and withdraw support.

**Bourbons of Munich**

Their policy of Nazi rearmament (taken over admittedly from the late Attlee-Bevin Labour Government) has surpassed even the infamous memory of Munich and Neville Chamberlain. They have placed British troops under the command of Hitler's generals. They have rebuilt the monster of Krupp, Thyssen and Speidel, in open defiance of every war-time pledge—at the same time as they have the insolence to refer to these violated pledges of allied anti-Nazi solidarity for the supposed justification of their claim to stay in West Berlin which they maintain as the extravagantly subsidised centre (over £5 a week per family) for the continuance of the Goebbels machine of anti-Soviet propaganda and subversion. Now they are busily equipping the monster, which has twice overrun France and brought Britain into deadly peril within the past half century, with nuclear arms and far greater powers of destruction than enslaved France and ravaged Britain less than two decades ago. These Tory Bourbons are incapable of learning. Professing in every speech to disavow and loathe Munich, and swearing they will never commit the same mistake again, they are repeating it to the letter. Once again they defend their policy of Nazi rearmament as building a bulwark against Bolshevism, even while they are diligently sharpening the knife for their own throats. How much

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longer can the British people afford to tolerate the lethal price of this leadership?*

**Strategic Insanity**

As in the inseparable counterpart of the NATO cold war strategy the people are now having to pay the price for the suicidal delusions and miscalculations of the Macmillan-Sandys strategic armaments plan, which has already thrown all sections of the armed services into bickering confusion and shackled the economy of the country with a heavier arms burden, in proportion to population and resources, than in any other major country. The successive stages of the delusions and confusions can be traced through the successive and contradictory Defence White Papers. Mr. Sandys began with the inspired conception that concentration on the horror weapon or H-bomb would enable Britain to cut down drastically all other services, and thus simultaneously halve arms expenditure and maintain the most formidable armament to terrify all enemies into capitulation. The naiveté of this conception was obvious at the outset to the veriest amateur. Indeed, if Mr. Sandys had only been a diligent student of *Labour Monthly,* he would have learned from these Notes in September, 1945, written within a few days of the dropping of the first atom bomb, a full exposure of the illusion, then widely spread in the press and by all publicists, that the atomic weapon rendered the older forms of arms and armed services out of date. But Tories can only learn the hard way, as in 1940.

**Awakening Hangover**

Now they have discovered that their nuclear armament (estimated at five H-bombs) is strategically insignificant save as a starting point for the destruction of Britain; that further nuclear development is swelling the costs to such fantastic heights as to raise the proposal, already recommended in an expert Anglo-American official report, of voluntary retirement of Britain from the race; and

*A personal memory may here be apposite. When the present writer had occasion to debate with the late Lord Vansittart on the B.B.C. in 1947, after the recording our talk turned on Germany. He upbraided 'the Left' for criticising his 'anti-Germanism' which he claimed to be historically justified. I explained that he had misconceived the criticism of the real Left (not the Gollancz pacifists). We had no criticism of hostility to German militarism and Nazism and were for the sternest fulfilment of the allied war-time pledges to destroy all its institutions. But we regarded with complete distrust and scepticism his vociferous 'anti-Germanism' because we were quite certain that he would soon be supporting German rearmament once again as the essential bulwark against communism. 'Impossible!' he exclaimed with indignation. However, like Ernest Bevin, who also declared even as late as March, 1950, that we have set our faces against the rearming of Germany', they all came round to it in time as an inseparable part of their Nato cold war policy. The dogs return to their vomit. But why should the British people let themselves be ruled by filth-loving dogs?

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that the type of colonial wars Britain normally wages (Suez, Cyprus, Oman, Aden, Jordan, Malaya) requires the old armed services and equipment more than ever. Hence they have successfully secured the worst of all possible worlds: to incur the cost and odium of the H-bomb without even a theoretical strategic advantage from it; to disorganise the existing armed services and then to require to rebuild them; and to incur in consequence such simultaneous mounting commitments in all directions as to raise the menace of an increase rather than any significant decrease in arms expenditure.

**Economic Fiascos**

In the economic sphere their policies have resulted in a series of resounding fiascos. Their boom of the spending spree, based mainly on temporary advantages in the terms of trade not due to their policy, soon gave place to panic measures of austerity, high interest and contraction. The boasted prosperity has been followed by stagnation and then actual decline. Nor have their positive measures been any more successful. The Montreal Commonwealth Financial and Economic Conference was announced with a bang and ended with a whimper, never producing the Commonwealth Development Fund which the British representatives had urged and which the Canadian representatives blocked in favour of leaving the initiative for President Eisenhower's proposals. Their plan for a European Free Trade Area, on which they had built their rosiest prediction, ended with a public humiliating rebuff. After cutting themselves off from the socialist world in favour of concentration on Western Europe, they have thus isolated themselves in Western Europe and been out-manœuvred by Western Germany. Now they have turned to the culminating gamble of partial convertibility of the pound.

## 3. *Their £ of Flesh*

Twice before the rulers of British finance have sought to resurrect their lost pre-1914 paradise of Britain's undisputed world financial supremacy by proclaiming anew the sovereign pound as a stable and convertible world currency with a relatively fixed gold value and rate of exchange. Once under a Conservative Government in 1925, with the restoration of the gold exchange standard by Winston Churchill as Chancellor of the Exchequer. The second time under a Labour Government in 1947, with the short-lived leap into convertibility under the terms of the American Loan Agreement. Each

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time the outcome was disastrous. Each time a devaluation of the pound finally followed. Now they are trying for the third time. Will a third devaluation of the pound eventually follow?

**Will o' the Wisp**

Why has this policy of convertibility proved always so deadly to post-1914 Britain, and yet always been so relentlessly pursued by Britain's rulers, like some will o' the wisp or *ignis fatuus* leading the besotted victims to the bog? In 1925 the triumph of the restoration of the gold standard was universally acclaimed by practically all the professional economists and experts. *Labour Monthly* at the time (in the *Notes* of March, 1925, on 'The Gold Standard') exposed the precarious basis of this stabilisation on a foundation of American credits, and predicted, not merely its future downfall, but how it would fall as soon as the return flow to America exceeded the new credits.* The 1929-31 crisis brought the fulfilment of this prediction with remarkable exactness. The 1947 leap into convertibility was far more short-lived, lasting only for a few weeks, because it was entirely without basis and no more than a typically blind and senseless obedience by Attlee and Cripps to their American masters. This time the gamble on convertibility has temporarily a little more basis than in 1947. But the instability of Britain's position and of international economic relations is far greater than in 1925-29.

**Basic Illusion**

Undoubtedly American pressure played a part, in varying forms, in Britain's *salto mortale* to convertibility in 1925, in 1947, and now again in 1958-59. The American interest in prising open the sterling sphere to the fullest penetration is obvious. But this is not

*The comment of John Strachey on this may be worth noting, since he is now regarded by all the anti-Marxist neophytes as the great economist refuter of Marxism:

'As it turned out the *Labour Monthly* was not out of touch with reality. It was those of us who took temporary stabilisation at its face value who proved to be out of touch with reality. . . . He prophesied both that the new world crisis of capitalism would come, and, what is more, he prophesied how it would come. So far as I know, he is the only economist who pointed out the inevitability of breakdown as soon as the outflow of capital from America ceased, before that event happened. His Notes in which he dealt with that subject remain to my mind the classic example of the predictive power which Marxist theory gives to a skilled observer. There is no better way of demonstrating that Marxism really does enable men to foretell the general line of development which lies ahead than by quoting these Notes to them and comparing them with the same analysis made by the capitalist theorists, like Salter, after the event. . . .

'I remember an ex-member of the Communist Party, now a prominent lecturer at London University, coming into my flat one day in the autumn of 1931, just after Britain had gone off the gold standard. "To think", he said with extreme bitterness, "to think that I should live to see R.P.D.'s Notes coming true." It was almost too much for him to bear. But he must bear it. R.P.D.'s Notes are still coming true.'

(John Strachey, *Labour Monthly*, July, 1936.)

If we may discount the personalised description for the collective work of Marxism, it may be said that 'ex-members of the Communist Party' and other anti-Marxists will still have to 'bear' the continued demonstration of the truth of Marxism in the world. Strachey may have fallen off the wagon again and be back where he started, but the train goes on.

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alone the explanation. Like Pétain and Weygand opening the gates to Hitler in 1940, the virgin wished to be raped. The British finance-capitalists have themselves sought this goal as their dearest aim, and even seen it as the means to combat the supremacy of the dollar. And it is here that we come to their basic fallacy. All their imagination yearns for 'Paradise Lost'—the pre-1914 world when London was the international financial centre, and sterling, made visible in the jingling golden sovereign, the universal world currency. Through convertibility they see the vision of 'Paradise Regained'. What they have failed to take into account is that the strength of sterling was only the reflection of the strength of British economy and British finance-capital (already overtaken, it is true, in the sphere of basic production by the United States and Germany, but still dominant in world trade and finance and as a world creditor, in contrast to the debtor position of the United States). The supremacy of sterling was the thermometer, not the cause of the power of British imperialism. But the new pundits seek to cure the sickness of the patient by juggling with the thermometer. By juggling with the thermometer they only make the patient worse.

**Battling with the Bodies of the Workers**

The price of the policy of convertibility has always been paid by the workers. The Dollar, the Pound, the Mark and the Franc go forth to battle in the shrinking world market. But the armies behind these glorious insignia, the armies from whom the casualties are drawn to lie on the stricken field, are always the workers. The price of Churchill's adventure was paid with the miners' lock out, the general strike, the slashing of wages, the onslaught on trade unionism and the long-drawn misery of mass unemployment. The price of Cripps' adventure was paid with Cripps' austerity drive, the wage freeze, the cuts in the social services and the fall of the Labour Government. What will be the price of Macmillan's adventure? In the name of 'saving the pound' every demand of the workers for wage increases or of the neediest for benefit increases will be met with stony negatives. 'Sound economy' will demand the closing down of coal pits or of steel capacity, so that the ghostly figure of a 'stable pound' may be erected over the dying body of the British economy whose health could alone sustain it.

**Tight Rope for a Labour Government**

More. The policy throws its shadows ahead—like a time bomb bequeathed by the Macmillan Government for a future Labour

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Government. Mr. Gaitskell has criticised the policy as 'a serious mistake . . . bad for Europe and bad for Britain'; Sir Vincent Tewson has called it 'precipitate'. But they have accepted it in practice and proclaimed no alternative programme. The consequences are evident. The convertible pound (so far only for foreigners or Britons in foreign countries, and not yet for that second class type of citizen 'British residents in Britain or the sterling area') is meant to attract a large volume of foreign capital to London. Three types of sequel may follow. If the prospective Labour Government sins in any respect against the conservative canons of financial orthodoxy or introduces any measure frowned upon by the City, a 'flight from the pound' by nervous foreign investors (let alone conscious manipulation easily operated by City interests with foreign connections) will rapidly snowball to menacing dimensions until panic-stricken Labour Ministers, under the cry of 'saving the pound', hastily change course and impose whatever burdens may be desired on the working class.

**How a Labour Government Could Founder**

Alternatively, the Labour Government, aware of the danger, may seek to escape it by rigorously conforming to the canons of financial orthodoxy and the requirements of the City, thus becoming a docile instrument of the City against the working class. But in that case follows the third alternative. The workers, ill disposed to accept a régime of austerity and the wage freeze as a return for their electoral victory, may force their trade unions into action, thereby leading to open conflict between the Government and the trade unions, explosion of the present somewhat factitious truce between Right and Left into mutual recriminations, and general disorganisation of the working class movement to prepare the way for the return to Toryism. It is even possible that a prospective Labour Government, under present conditions and leadership, may go through all three of these stages in succession, leaving only angry memories behind.

## 4. *Fight for an Alternative Programme*

This is why it is so important to conduct the fight for a serious alternative working class programme beforehand already today. It is not a question, as the right wing leadership fondly imagines, of

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an impatient left minority desiring to impose doctrinaire solutions in advance of the readiness of the majority of the labour movement or electorate. The situation is far more serious. It is now a life and death question for the working class movement to cut free from the rosewater illusions of the right wing theorists, living in a make-believe fairyland of an imaginary reformed capitalism, and to face the harsh realities of modern post-war Britain—realities which broke the last Labour Government, and which any future Labour Government will have to master or perish.

**The Fight is Here**

This fight is not confined to the question of the future programme of a Labour Government after the election. It is more than the question of the programme during the election. The fight is here now—as the miners of South Wales and Scotland and other areas, steelworkers, aircraft, shipbuilding, textile, building and other sections of workers have reason to know. Mr. Gaitskell may travel to meet the people in South Wales and elsewhere; but he had no answer to the insistent questions of the South Wales miners in the doomed areas what they should do now in face of the closing of the pits. The 'economic necessity' of closing down the pits is accepted by Mr. Gaitskell and the right wing leaders ('economic necessity' of cutting down drastically the production of coal and steel in Britain in the coming year while socialism leaps ahead!). Here is capitalism in action. Here is the practical test of working class leadership. Here is the living contrast of capitalism and socialism.

**From the Present to the Future**

The strength of the present fight for the vital interests and demands of the workers in face of the already launched intense capitalist offensive of the employers, State Capitalist Boards and Tory Government, is bound up with the fight for a fundamental change in the policies of Britain: the ending of the H-bomb madness, arms race, colonial wars and the cold war; economic co-operation with the socialist world; and a reversal of the existing ruinous economic policy in Britain. It is the strength of this present fight which will determine the success of the further fight for the defeat of Toryism and the return of a new Government with a new programme in the coming election.

*January 19, 1959.* R.P.D.

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# THE SUICIDE CLUB

Ivor Montagu

THERE are many more ways than one of committing suicide. One is to go on developing nuclear weapons and hoping that nothing will come of it. Another is to let others do this without doing anything to stop the process. The honour of Bertrand Russell's old age is that he is largely devoting it to saving humanity from committing suicide in either of these ways. But another is to misdirect those who wish to save humanity, so that their energies are wasted on the empty air. This, alas, is likely to be a consequence of Bertrand Russell's 'Common Sense'.*

I do not wish to smother Bertrand Russell with suffocating and humiliating tolerance, after the fashion of the British and American establishments, who load him with honours and royalties, and humour him with simulated respect, all the time whispering behind their hands 'The old man's dippy. See his grey hairs'. Nor do I wish to polemize with him, though this would be easy; he spends some space in this book endeavouring to prove that he is not an agent or dupe of Moscow, explanation that really should be unnecessary to anyone but McCarthy's ghost, and trying to explain away the fact that in the days when only America had atomic weapons, he was in favour of threatening to drop one on Moscow, whereas now he would like all warfare abolished. This is a perfectly logical change of mind, but he seeks to prove consistency, explaining his former attitude as having been the best way—in the circumstances of those days—to avoid world destruction by nuclear arms. I simply do not believe this account of his motive. I do not believe he would have given the same advice to Stalin had U.S.S.R. not U.S.A. then possessed monopoly of the bomb. Again, the practical details of some of his proposals are fatuous—he seems to fancy that de Gaulle, Macmillan and Adenauer could agree that one of them (which one?) could suffice to represent West Europe on a conciliation committee beside two Americans. But all this is trivial, and irrelevant.

What I wish to do is to acclaim the basic, broad fundament of his viewpoint with vigour and without reserve. The world is in the debt of this aged, and, in the past, often mistaken, philosopher who is devoting his last breathing years to trying to keep us all

*_Common Sense and Nuclear Warfare_, by Bertrand Russell. (Allen & Unwin. 7s. 6d. cloth, 3s. 6d. paper.)

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alive. The trouble is that prejudice restrains him from going the right way to achieve his object. Those who heed his warning—and stop there—will find themselves sidetracked, their efforts nugatory or frustrated, their hopes dispelled.

What is Russell's 'Common Sense'? Broadly: that nuclear warfare would be a disaster, the magnitude of which is insufficiently realised and all must understand; that its possibility requires a new attitude on the part of governments, in which they approach it as an ill of humanity to be avoided in co-operation, as they would combine to avoid some pestilence, rather than as a means of combat to be preserved for national ends either of conquest or to avoid being conquered; that those who, knowing the capacity of nuclear warfare for destruction, wish to retain it (including all its assumed capacity for exterminating the human race) and threaten its unleashing rather than tolerate social changes which all human experience teaches us would not themselves be unchanging are monsters, fanatics, to be chained and discredited, rather than statesmen (or soldiers, or divines) meriting admiration; that conciliation and *détente* to be practical of attainment should be gradual and at each stage confer no military or strategic advantage on either side; that such conciliation should proceed forthwith. With this thesis I have not a word of quarrel. It is the most important matter in the world. I cheer it. I shout 'Hurrah!'. I declare Bertrand Russell on the side of the angels.

Unfortunately he refuses to stay on that side, and adopts a perpetual pose of scuttling back to a non-existent middle. Sometimes he comes very near to appearing to seek this middle from motives of expediency in propaganda. In some places he seeks to balance condemnation of some egregious action, posture or declaration by an American politico—so clear that it is impossible to ignore its folly or infamy—by 'supposing' (that is the word he constantly uses in such cases) without a shred of hard factual evidence, a similar folly or wickedness on the Soviet side. Sometimes, in his desire to believe in equal error, his wrong-headed anxiety to grasp after something that, by appearing equal, can still allow him to go on balancing on his uncomfortable razor-edge, he invents or distorts to his purpose. Type and kernel of this is his distortion of a phrase in the Khrushchov letter from his famous triangular correspondence in the *New Statesman* that included Dulles. Khrushchov wrote: 'I think that if imperialism unleashes a new world war, it will perish in it. The peoples will not want to put up with a system which cannot exist without wars, without the annihilation

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of millions of people, to enrich a handful of monopolists'. He blindly thinks that this means Khrushchov believes in the possibility of military victory by nuclear warfare. From this to suggesting that Communists would like to achieve such a victory is only one more step. He appears totally blind to the fact that Khrushchov is not speaking of military victory at all, that Communists do not in the least regard military victory as an essential or even desirable method of securing the replacement of imperialism by communism, whose triumph they regard as certain and would look on as certain, if more distant, even if U.S.S.R. and the Peoples' Republic of China were wiped from the map; since they believe that it springs from the inevitable shaping of human relations deriving from human nature itself in its environment: and that what Khrushchov is speaking of is the patent fact that whatever system unleashes world nuclear war, and however many hundreds of millions be the number of casualties, the system responsible will be unpopular with the survivors. A proposition with which, surely, few will disagree.

The trouble is, however, not the mental contortions Russell goes through in his endeavour to justify the 'a-plague-on-both-your-houses' attitude. The trouble is that thereby he condemns himself and those who follow his example to sterility.

The trouble about assuming a neutral position between A and B, and trying thereafter to be constructive (as Russell, to his infinite credit, tries) is that if your effort is to suggest an intermediate position, X, the moment you have advocated this you can, in essence, no longer be neutral. If A accepts the compromise and comes to X, and B will not, you the mediator must thereafter support A or, if—in the interest of conciliation—you cannot bring yourself to do so, you inevitably become a supporter of B. You either have to conceal from the public the fact that A has in fact come to X, or you have to justify B in not coming there; in either case you objectively divert public opinion from pressing the real culprit responsible for non-agreement at point X, the one you yourself designated earlier as fair.

It is exactly this process that Russell follows throughout. Re-examine his main thesis, as I have extracted it (and in a way I am sure he would not dissent from): exactly this is also, and has been throughout, the attitude of the Soviet government, exactly his procedures (in their essentials) of stage by stage advance conferring no advantage and conciliatory discussion of every question, is its own. The make-up of the Russell conciliation committee (2 Americans, 1

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West European, 2 Soviet, 1 Chinese, 2 neutrals) is even *more* favourable to U.S.S.R. than that which U.S.S.R. has demanded (and the NATO powers refuse)—*i.e.*, equal numbers, on one side of NATO-orientated powers, on the other of Soviet sympathetic states plus neutrals counted together. Yet nowhere is there the slightest recognition of this, and that hence it is to the NATO group and not the Soviet group that the blame attaches for no agreement such as he desires having been reached or even attempted. To argue as he has done, that both sides are equally to blame, is shutting both eyelids before putting the telescope to the bridge of one's nose. Why does Russell, so clear-sighted on the fundament of the problem, behave in this way. Real blindness? Misjudgment of expediency? I do not know, but he is thereby encouraging the anti-political tendencies of his followers, discouraging them from the duty of analysis and judgment, diverting them from applying pressure where it must be applied to achieve results—in a word, for the peace movement it is a counsel of castration.

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## HAVELOCK ELLIS CENTENARY

*Havelock Ellis, whose birth centenary is being celebrated on February 2, wrote for* Labour Monthly *on War and the Fighting Instinct, a quarter of a century ago. He intimated that he did it partly in homage to the memory of his friend Eleanor, the youngest daughter of Karl Marx.*

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*LABOUR MONTHLY* TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO

## A CHANNEL OF PUBLICITY

The Revolutionary Movement—with the Soviet Union as its vanguard showing the only way forward of limitless economic, scientific and cultural advance—more than ever before needs all the channels of publicity, all the advance posts, which it has set up in what is still the enemies' country, at once to counter the panic-stricken fury and break up and expose this motley mob of the last despairing crew of the decaying régime of capitalism, and at the same time to take part in the organisation of the working class for their overthrow.

The *Labour Monthly* is one of these channels of publicity which, in spite of critical days in the past has held on and has been one of the vital instruments for the development of the revolutionary movement in Britain. For over twelve years it has been able to play its role in promoting the understanding of revolutionary Marxism in the working class movement.

From a statement by the Editorial Board, February, 1934.

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# A MEMOIR OF G. D. H. COLE

(September 25, 1889 - January 14, 1959).

R. Page Arnot

G. D. H. COLE, outstanding scholar, trade union historian, economist and publicist, very early gained a high reputation in the British labour movement, a reputation which he retained to the end. As a leader of University Socialists he was unlike so many generations of university socialists before the first world war in that he early plunged into activity in connection with strikes and other forms of trade union action. An exceptionally brilliant academic career brought him a prize Fellowship at Magdalen College, Oxford, from 1912 to 1919, years which he employed chiefly in work in the labour movement. In the last forty years of his life he filled a succession of high academic posts in Oxford including the Chichele Professorship of Social and Political Theory from 1944 onwards. But it was in 1911 at the time of the Syndicalist agitation led by Tom Mann and the great strikes successively of the transport workers, railwaymen and miners that Cole's lucid and forceful articles gave a lead to the younger generation of trade unionists in an agitation against the dominance over the labour movement of Ramsay MacDonald, Philip Snowden, J. H. Thomas and also Sidney Webb and the older trade union leaders surviving from the Liberal period. It was also the time of the stormy agitation and strike activities in Ireland, led by Jim Larkin and James Connolly, while within the labour movement the *New Age,* edited by A. R. Orage, was developing its propaganda of guild socialism. In its columns and still more in the columns of the *Daily Herald,* established in the spring of 1912, as the first Labour daily with a left-wing outlook in contradistinction to the very reformist, and as it turned out, shortlived *Daily Citizen,* fostered by Ramsay MacDonald, Keir Hardie, John Hodge and the more right-wing leaders of the trade unions, Cole's writings seemed to mark a new development. His book, *World of Labour,* published in 1913, was highly esteemed amongst the younger generation of trade unionists who found in it theoretical justification for the 'direct action' frowned upon by the older socialists and trade unionists.

Inside the Fabian Society Cole carried on a propaganda for a change in policy that would have transformed its function into that of a mainly research body within the united socialist party

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recommended by the International Socialist Bureau in its manifesto of 1913 to British socialists.

Cole in furtherance of this led a movement of revolt inside the Fabian Society called 'The Right Moment' agitation which was, however, defeated by 'the old gang' in the early summer of 1915.

Meantime Cole had been taking an increasingly prominent part in the Fabian Research Department founded in 1912 by Beatrice Webb, of which I became secretary in the early months of 1914. During the whole period of the 1914-18 war when G. B. Shaw was chairman, Cole (apart from a brief period of months) officiated as vice-chairman or as honorary secretary of what in the end of that war became the Labour Research Department; and if Beatrice Webb earlier was the main guide and driving force, latterly Cole played an increasingly important part in the development of its work, the broadening of its structure and the growth of its affiliations. In all Cole held these offices in the Research Department from 1914 onwards for ten years.

At the same time he was actively developing the guild socialist movement in the shape of the National Guilds League which, however, was dealt a mortal blow by the slump that followed the post-war boom of 1919-20. In the Labour Research Department Cole contributed several trade union studies. Outstanding amongst them was *The Payment of Wages*. Connected with this work on trade union theory in which he with the younger members of the Department kept up a running fight with what was considered to be the right-wing policy and outlook of Beatrice and Sidney Webb and of their more immediate supporters like C. M. Lloyd was the development of close relations with some of the trade unions. The trade unions and notably the Amalgamated Society of Engineers (now the Amalgamated Engineering Union) were encountering under the stress of war problems that had never come up in the preceding half century of their existence. Cole, whose socialist outlook was one of indifference to the war issues that were splitting the labour movement, or at any rate the socialist parties, concentrated on the finding of solutions to the problems confronting trade unionism, and to the still deeper problems confronting the working class in the behaviour of the war-time Coalition Government. Though an adherent of industrial unionism, he was able to gain an insight into the problems and the workings of craft unions of an amount and a breadth that had not been touched since the Webbs worked

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on their *History of Trade Unionism* nearly a quarter of a century earlier.

In addition to his work for the Labour Research Department and partly as a result of it and of the close association built up with the trade unions, Cole at the request of Arthur Henderson undertook the very considerable labour of building up the series of Advisory Committees which were to provide detailed programmes for the newly reconstituted Labour Party with its individual membership and its upward leap in representation in the House of Commons. But after some two years Cole found that he could not tolerate being associated with and by implication being held partly responsible for opportunist policies on the part of the Labour Party leaders, and resigned from this office. As it turned out this meant stepping down from the high position he would have undoubtedly attained in the councils of the Labour Party. Much lesser men as well as more opportunist leaders in the persons of Arthur Greenwood and Clement Attlee (not to speak of Hugh Dalton and Harold Laski) stepped into his shoes.

Thereafter Cole whose standpoint in criticism of Labour's opportunist policy had been temporarily sharpened by the developments of the Russian revolution and by a study of the writings of Lenin, played more and more an advisory role—a role of advisor and counsellor and teacher. Together with his academic work he continued his assistance with the Workers' Educational Association and at the same time broadened his survey to include all sections of the co-operative movement. A never-ceasing stream of articles and books flowed from his pen.* With prodigious energy and powers of work he produced a book for every year of his adult life as well as a considerable number of lighter works. These last, both in prose and verse, were mostly written in collaboration with his wife, Margaret, herself an author of wide range, who for over forty years from the days of 1916 in the Research Department shared his political interests and activities. Thus in 1939 she became secretary for many years of the resuscitated Fabian Society when Cole for a dozen years held its presidency.†

It was Beatrice Webb who asked me at Passfield Corner if I knew

*Cole wrote a number of articles for *Labour Monthly* including: 'Black Friday' and After, July, 1921; A Word to the Engineers, March, 1922; The British Labour Movement—A Retrospect, August, 1922; The United Front and the People's Front, January, 1937; The People's Front, March, 1937; 1917-1937: Anniversary Greetings, November, 1937; Trade Unionism and Rearmament, May, 1938; 'Britain For the People', September, 1944.

†An activity preceded by the earlier formation of the Socialist Society for Propaganda and Research and by the still earlier New Fabian Research Bureau.

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that Cole was taking charge in the Fabian Society and said, 'Mr. Cole is now moving very far to the right-wing—far, far more to the right than ever the Webbs were'. But this was not to last. Nobody could bet on Cole to be a consistent Right-winger. His dæmon forbade it.

At crucial moments in the last 35 years of his life he took a stand in opposition to the worsening opportunism of the leaders of the Labour Party, as for example at the time of the Popular Front agitation in 1936 to 1938. Again, in 1951 he resigned from the Chairmanship of the Fabian Society whose members (comprising also the overwhelming majority of the Labour M.P.s) supported the war in Korea. Cole wrote:

> If Great Britain gets dragged into war with China by the Americans, I shall be on the side of China. I do not like Communism but I like even less reactionary landlordism backed by foreign force against the will of the people.

Again, appalled by the consequences of the split in the workers' movement, Cole more than once sought to find some common ground for establishing unity between communists and those non-communists who wanted to put an end to capitalism. In this connection, it is significant that in the last two volumes (covering 1914 to 1931) of his historical survey of the theoretical outlooks of the movement, he finds by 1931 that the Russian Revolution has produced something to think about.

In the last words of his last book published before his death Cole wrote:

> Yet the Russian Revolution, despite the evils that ensued upon it both internationally and at home, remains a great and a glorious achievement. . . . I am sure the Russian Revolution did act as an immense liberating force . . . it cannot be easy to strike the correct balance between good and evil; but I at any rate can feel no doubt that the long-run balance will turn out to be on the right side.

The final testimony of the later Chairman of the Fabian Society thus echoed, after many hesitations, the last testament of the founders of Fabianism, the Webbs in their *Soviet Communism: A New Civilisation.*

It was not simple petulance that made Cole refer to 'Bevin's disastrous foreign policy' or say as he did three years ago:

> I used to have some respect for Mr. Attlee; but he forfeited it all when he became an Earl and a Knight of the Garter.

It was something more than that. For, despite his regular features and absence of any eccentricity in dress or behaviour, Cole was

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singularly like one of these ancient Hebrew prophets who in the Biblical narrative keep popping up to rebuke and denounce wicked kings, false prophets, backsliders and idolaters (such as the throng in parliament that worship the Golden Calf); and who then retire for a season amongst their disciples until the spirit drives them forth again. They horrify the misleaders: but they disappoint the people who are looking for a consistent and continuous lead in struggle.

Thus deep study and keen wits, vast knowledge and an immense practical capacity went together: and yet all was as in a dream, and outside the real world, into which irruptions only were made from time to time.

Black swans—they are few and far between. But there have been several since 1917. They continue a strain of pre-1914 socialism that is burningly sincere but becoming more and more remote until it dwells in a twentieth-century Utopia. Of such Goethe wrote:

*Zwei Seelen wohnen, ach! in meiner Brust.*
(Two souls, alas, dwell in my breast.)

His kindly interest in nearly every side of the movement (except Communism, to which he was steadily opposed but not always as an embittered enemy like the Mollets and the Morrisons) continued unabated throughout his life. Two years ago he was elected vice-president of the William Morris Society and his Address to it on William Morris's Socialism recalled his first socialist interests of fifty years earlier.

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# SHOP STEWARDS TODAY

Bill Warman

*[In view of the widespread offensive in the millionaire press and by governmental or semi-official agencies against trade unions and especially against shop stewards, as exemplified in the B.O.A.C. Inquiry Report, we have asked the Convener of Shop Stewards in an important works in Coventry for this article, which we have much pleasure in printing.—Ed.*, L.M.]

THE Report on the British Overseas Airways Corporation dispute* has brought more into the open how extremely vicious is the mounting attack by the employers on the shop stewards movement.

Today, when the problem which is foremost in the minds of British workers is how to defend their jobs against a deliberate policy of creating unemployment and to ward off the effects of capitalist slump, the attack on their representatives, of which the B.O.A.C. dispute is but one example, has significance beyond the aircraft industry. It is a warning to workers everywhere, and is worth their study.

Why does the attack begin against shop stewards?

The modern shop stewards' movement came into prominence during the First World War. Since then it has so increased in importance that most unions now have provision in their rule books which govern their functions. These are, broadly, to interpret agreements that have been negotiated between employers and the trade unions and to ensure that they are carried out in the best interest of the workers; to negotiate pieceworkers' prices; to defend all aspects of working conditions and to protect the workers from being unfairly treated on the job.

This is, of course, not the first time that the opponents of the working class have attacked the shop stewards, who are blamed for everything. Any union official who supports them is described as either 'weak', 'irresponsible', or a 'Communist'; whereas every official who make public criticisms of them, such as Mr. Jim Matthews, of the Municipal and General Workers Union, is praised for his 'statesmanlike approach' and 'clear thinking'. Any dispute, large or small, is distorted by the yellow press. One of the most common charges is that of 'undemocratic procedures'; workers are

*From October 13 to 21, 1958, there was a strike at London Airport affecting 4,000 employers of the B.O.A.C. A Court of Inquiry, appointed on October 22 by the Minister of Labour, seven weeks later, reported adversely on the activities of the shop stewards.

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# CARTOON BY GILRAY, 1795

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Prices of Provision. 1795
Mutton — 10½ Ld.
Lamb — 11. D°.
Veal — 11½ D°.
Beef — 12 - D°.
Small Bur. 2. p.r Quart.
Bread — 12 —
— p.r Quarter Loaf
God save the King.
Journeymens Wages — 1795.
Carpenters - 12 - p.r Week
Shoemakers - 10s - D°
Bakers — 9th - D°
Gardeners - 8th - D°
Smiths — 8th - D°
Husbandmen 7th - D°
Js Gy des.t et fec.t

# The BRITISH-BUTCHER,

Pub.d July 6th 1795 - by H. Humphrey N.o 27. New Bond Street

*Supplying JOHN-BULL with a Substitute for BREAD.* Vide Message to Lord Mayor.

**BILLY the BUTCHER's advice to JOHN BULL.**

*Since Bread is so dear, (and you say you must Eat,)*
*For to save the Eccpence, you must live upon Meat;*
*And as Twelve Pence the Quartern you can't pay for Bread*
*Get a Crown's worth of Meat, — it will serve in its stead.*

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supposed to strike against their own wishes and only because they have been ordered to do so and 'dominated' by the stop stewards.

What are the facts? The shop steward is the most democratic representative of the people who have elected him to speak for them. He comes up for election annually; he is in constant contact with the people he represents. On matters affecting their interests which he negotiates daily, weekly and monthly, he is continually reporting to the men. Whilst expressing his own point of view, he must carry out the majority decision of his section. He does not get away with an election once every four or five years, like Members of Parliament, many of whom then vanish from the political arena until another General Election is round the corner. It is a clear contrast between such 'democratic' Members of Parliament, who at times speak and act in exact opposition to the will of the majority of the people who have elected them, and shop stewards, who are workers amongst other workers. No public representative carries out the desires of those who elect him more conscientiously than the shop steward. Should he fail to do so, he would soon find himself replaced by someone the workers can trust. It is a great pity that we cannot so easily replace public figures who claim to speak for the British people, and in fact act in the interest only of the employing classes.

Why the attacks today? Shop stewards represent the collective view of workers in shop or factory; it is precisely this collective view which frightens employers. The slanders, distortions and half-truths are part of the concerted attack being waged against the standard of life of the whole working class. Employers have frequently complained about full employment; their Tory government is doing its best to create unemployment. All that has stood in their way up till now has been the determined fight of many workers in industry. At Standard Motors, British Motor Corporation, Wickmans', Ford's, B.O.A.C. and elsewhere, workers led by their shop stewards expressed their determination not to go back to dole queues and half starvation. Employers seek to weaken resistance by splitting the working class. One way is by undermining confidence in shop stewards.

Many trade union officials well understand the value of the shop stewards' organisations to the trade union movement. They know that if these organisations are weakened, the whole trade union movement suffers. By defending the rights of shop stewards, the first line of defence, they defend their own independent position.

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The trade unions were formed 250 years ago, because the men realised that on their own they did not stand a cat in hell's chance against the employers. They have been able to better the standard of life of the British people considerably since those early days. The shop stewards system is the method by which they have been working for nearly 50 years.

Unfortunately, not all the attacks come from the employers themselves. Certain right-wing trade union leaders also play a part in it. They talk of 'limiting the powers of the shop stewards'; they do not like shop stewards to get together; they accuse them of taking over certain functions rightfully belonging to them alone.

In no circumstances must we give way on shop stewards' functions and rights. There must be resolutions of protest against every attack by whatever individual or body.

When a shop steward has been given instructions to carry out decisions made in his factory, he must have full support of every man in the section and trade union to which he belongs, to safeguard him from victimisation. This is to defend the most important aspect of working class life.

Workers everywhere should be warned of the dangers inherent in these attacks on shop stewards. The Communists' position is that they will always fight for strengthening shop stewards' organisations. We will play our part in factory and workshop in the interest of fellow-workers, alongside the thousands of others who are not Communists, with whom we work proudly in defence of wages and conditions.

The answer to these attacks should be to take every step to increase the power and strength of the shop stewards organisation. The increasing tendency to monopoly concerns in industry has led to the need for shop stewards' committees in factories such as the British Motor Corporation, Ford's and others to form themselves into 'Combine Committees' covering the whole concern. Thus the trade unions can avoid the danger of being played off against one another, and by keeping each of the Combine informed of developments in its many workshops, can help to create and maintain the essential unity and strength against the common employer.

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# CONVERTIBILITY AND AFTER

J. R. Campbell

IN the midst of the great economic crisis between the wars (1929-1933) the trading and currency arrangements of the capitalist world based on the gold exchange standard were seriously disrupted and had to be abandoned. In the midst of another (though as yet milder) economic crisis today attempts are being made to restore a similar monetary system. That is the meaning of the moves toward convertibility announced by various European governments.

The gold exchange standard perished in 1931 under the accumulating strains of the world economic crisis. It became clear that the system could not work, because its very structure allowed American monopoly capitalism to hog most of the monetary gold in the world and to thereby intensify the crisis that was raging. In addition the system made it more difficult for states which wanted to do something to mitigate the crisis. Even before the crisis 1929-33 developed, the gold standard, in post-war conditions, was proving to be fiercely inimical to working class conditions. Any country which was experiencing foreign trade difficulties was bound to lose gold, and to stop this loss it was expected to take measures to lower the cost of production of its exports, which meant lowering wages. A gold-backed currency was expected in good and bad times to remain at the same level as all other currencies based on gold. It was wages which were expected to adjust themselves in a downward direction in period of crisis.

The ruthless application of this policy in Britain caused the miners' strike and the General Strike in 1926. Prime Minister Baldwin's 1925 dictum 'the wages of all workers must come down' was the expression of this policy. A stable pound, but unstable wages and employment was the aim.

When the capitalist States were blown off the Gold Standard, they went over to a type of policy which could be summed up in the phrase 'economic nationalism'. The capitalist world tended to split up into sterling, dollar and franc currency blocs. A whole series of bilateral trade agreements took the place of multilateral trade. All capitalist governments were under pressure to do something positive to reduce unemployment. In fact many of the measures of economic nationalism were of a beggar-my-neighbour character, and they certainly did not eliminate unemployment or even reduce it to moderate proportions. They did, however,

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diminish the power of the United States to use its great economic strength at the expense of weaker states in the capitalist world; they also tended to reduce the business of the City of London with regard to banking and the operation of commodity markets.

It has therefore been the unrelenting purpose of the United States of America to eliminate as far as possible all measures of economic nationalism and achieve a world in which all currencies will be interchangeable at fixed rates and in which there would be no discrimination against dollar goods.

In the British loan in 1946, in the Marshall Aid agreements, in the assistance given to the setting up of the European Payments Union, the United States never ceased to insist that these were measures whose logical end would be the full interchangeability of all currencies. The Bank of England and the big merchant banks of the 'City' were eager to co-operate. They thought they saw possibilities in restoring London as the world's financial centre.

As far back as 1952 the City and some prominent officials in the Treasury were in favour of a dash to convertibility. Only Tory fears as to the reaction of the country, if this proved to be a dash to mass unemployment as well as to convertibility, made the Government hesitate.

The main reason for the present decision to extend convertibility on the part of the British Government and the City was the pressure of the Americans and West Germans. True, the propagandists of the City have pretended that the pound had been strengthened considerably in recent months and was now strong enough to undertake the adventure. This, however, is purely a short-term situation. Productivity in British industry, and therefore power to compete in the world market, has not improved as fast as that of Britain's main competitors, West Germany and the U.S.A. Indeed British productivity is stagnant, while that of U.S.A. and West Germany is growing, though slowly. It is true that Britain's foreign trade balance has become favourable owing to a big improvement in the terms of trade. Britain can now get raw materials much cheaper than before owing to a world-wide fall in prices. This means, however, the relative impoverishment of Britain's colonies and dominions and will make it more difficult to maintain British exports to these countries in the immediate future. It is absurd to build a long-term policy on such shifting sands.

Besides it is widely recognised that the policy of convertibility must be developed further. The next steps are likely to be the relaxation of discrimination against dollar goods so that more

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American imports can be admitted to the United Kingdom. From that the final and most hazardous step, that of making some of the sterling in the hands of British citizens convertible into dollars cannot long be delayed.

Before discussing the effects on conditions inside Britain, it is necessary to remember the continuing crisis, the sharpening competition in the world market, the West German and French rejection of the Free Trade Area, and the entrance of the U.S. motor firms into competition for the small car market. Suppose in these circumstances some adverse development—the loss of the U.S. car market, the fall in exports to the colonies, the loss of trade in the Common Market Area, the failure of capital investment in Britain to grow sufficiently—causes a move from sterling into dollars or marks. The only way the Government and banks can respond to this situation is to operate a policy similar to that pursued when Britain was on the Gold Standard or the Exchange Gold Standard. This involves trying to keep the pound stable while exerting a downward pressure on wages and costs of production generally. To do this means reverting to the dear money policy, using it to create unemployment and urging the employers in the new situation sharply to reduce wage costs. This in the first place may not involve a direct attack on weekly or hourly wage rates. It could mean attacks on piece-rates, on merit money, on all those extras which were squeezed out of the employers at the height of the boom. It could also mean a ruthless drive to economise labour inside the various factories. It is a well-known fact that employers, with memories of past labour shortages, have been carrying more men than are needed, encouraged by the Tory promises that the recession will soon be over, and also because they did not want a fierce redundancy dispute with the workers resisting dismissals. Now policies involving substantial dismissals will be imposed on them more and more. Or the adverse developments may take place if the economy remains stagnant and public opinion forces the Government to attempt a more comprehensive anti-slump policy. If foreign holders of sterling react against this policy the Government may be forced to abandon it. Indeed under certain circumstances the Government might be intimidated from embarking on this type of policy at all.

Indeed convertibility renders it more easy for the finance-capitalists in Britain to mobilise their opposite numbers abroad to bring pressure on a British government whose general policy they dislike, even if that policy does not attack the capitalist basis of

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society. We know from a recent article in the *Labour Monthly* how in 1931 the British banks were not above securing the co-operation of their American colleagues in bringing pressure on the Labour government to cut unemployed relief. We now know that at the time of the Attlee government there were some flights from the pound organised by reactionary groups in this country despite the existence of exchange controls. With those controls much weakened the power of financial groups to obstruct or intimidate governments is correspondingly increased.

It is of course being argued that the recent move to convertibility will make it easier to attract foreign money to this country and that will strengthen the position of the pound. But money which comes to this country to make a quick profit or to avoid a loss elsewhere, can, with a slight change of circumstances, depart as speedily as it came. Indeed there is quite a danger of the Government and the banks adopting higher interest rates than exist elsewhere, in order to keep foreign money here and in so doing definitely discouraging industrial development in Britain. There is no doubt that up until 1931 the policy of high interest rates held British capitalism back in comparison with some of its continental rivals. Speculation can also take place in relation to the possibility of the election of a progressive government in order to frighten the electorate and induce a panic vote against such a government.

Naturally this monetary set-up will increase the power of the international financial institutions which have been set up, under American control in the post-war period, namely the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Indeed one of the arguments for moving closer to convertibility is that Britain will now be able to call upon the Monetary Fund to help it in the present operation. Thus American monopoly capitalism will have increased possibilities of disciplining the lesser capitalist States and forcing them to conform to an international capitalist trade and monetary set-up which will favour the U.S. as the strongest capitalism.

It is possible that these new monetary arrangements will free powerful capitalist groups from the supervision even of governments supporting monopoly capitalism. Far be it to suggest that these groups despising the State, will go back to a policy completely rejecting State intervention. The State will always be useful to them for the repression of the workers and as a milch cow. But there is little doubt that some groups will be able in certain circumstances to ignore State policy and even work against it, if they see more profits coming that way. The further aggrandisement of

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finance capitalist groups—possibly on an Anglo-German or an Anglo-American basis—and a further increase in their already enormous political power seems inevitable, unless this policy is changed.

Mr. Gaitskell, the leader of the Labour Party, and his Shadow Cabinet have deplored the Government's decision on convertibility and have stressed its dangers. But they do not propose to reverse this policy or even re-examine it. What, besides contempt, they expect to gain from this craven attitude we are not told. Of course the Tories would raise a great clamour about Labour being against a strong pound, but surely the Labour Party could demonstrate the immense damage which this kind of measure did to British export industries between 1925 and 1931. If Labour is not going to oppose dangerous Tory measures, because of the danger of misrepresentation in an election, then it will inevitably get into a state of frozen immobility fatal to its election prospects.

What of Labour policy in the light of this refusal? In the period from 1945-51 Right-wing Labour theorists insisted that it was possible to control capitalism, in order to maintain full employment and keep prices stable. In point of fact the more capitalism emerged from war-time conditions, the more ineffective some of the Labour controls became. Still for what it was worth the Labour Party from 1951 onward declared that the Tory policy of attempting to control the economy by manipulating interest rates and taxes was insufficient. Those monetary controls would have to be supplemented by physical controls, the Labour Party said, such as controls over raw materials, over imports, over the licencing of machinery and over buildings. The *master* control was, however, exchange control, designed to prevent a flight of capital from Britain. Gradually the Labour Party ceased to advocate most of these controls. In its *Plan for Progress* only two controls were left, namely, building licences and exchange control. Now the party is refusing to reverse the Tory policy of weakening exchange controls. It is still talking about controlling capitalism or rather 'the new mixed economy' as it prefers to call it, but what its control instruments are it is no longer able to tell us.

So the basic lessons of the new step towards convertibility appear to be (1) that the workers standard is menaced as never before in the post-war period, and that the whole movement must prepare for struggle ahead, and (2) that the Right-wing policy 'Managed capitalism' is breaking down in face of the first serious challenge.

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# AFRICA AWAKENED

W. E. B. DuBois

*[The All-African People's Conference met at Accra in Ghana from December 5-12. Sixty-two organisations representing 200,000,000 Africans from 28 territories participated. It was the first conference of representatives of the peoples of Africa gathered on African soil to proclaim their determination to win African freedom. A series of important resolutions was passed, filled with a spirit of struggle against imperialism. We are pleased to print the Address prepared for the All-African People's Conference by Dr. W. E. B. DuBois, who is 91 this month. The Address, read to the Conference by his wife, Shirley Graham, was given an ovation. —Ed.*, L.M.]

FELLOW Africans: About 1735, my great-great grandfather was kidnapped on this coast of West Africa and taken by the Dutch to the colony of New York in America, where he was sold in slavery. About the same time a French Huguenot, Jacques DuBois, migrated from France to America and his great-grandson, born in the West Indies and with Negro blood, married the great granddaughter of my black ancestor. I am the son of this couple, born in 1868, hence my French name and my African loyalty.

As a boy I knew little of Africa save legends and some music in my family. The books which we studied in the public school had almost no information about Africa, save of Egypt, which we were told was not Negroid. I heard of few great men of Negro blood, but I built up in my mind a dream of what Negroes would do in the future, even though they had no past.

Then happened a series of events. In the last decade of the nineteenth century, I studied two years in Europe, and often heard Africa mentioned with respect. Then as a teacher in America, I had a few African students. Later at Atlanta University a visiting professor, Franz Boaz, addressed the students and told them of the history of the Black Sudan. I was utterly amazed and began to study Africa for myself. I attended the Paris Exposition in 1900, and met with West Indians in London in a Pan-African Conference. This movement died, but in 1911 I attended a Races Congress in London which tried to bring together representatives from all races of the world. I met distinguished Africans and was thrilled. However, World War I killed this movement.

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We held a small meeting in 1919 in Paris. After peace was declared, in 1921, we called a much larger Pan-African Congress. The two hundred delegates at this congress aroused the fury of the colonial powers and all our efforts for third, fourth and fifth congresses were only partially successful because of their opposition. We tried in vain to convene a congress in Africa itself. . . . World financial depression interfered with all these efforts and suspended the Pan-African Congresses until the meeting in Manchester, 1945. Then it was reborn and this meeting now in Accra is the sixth effort to bring this great movement before the world and to translate its experience into action.

My only role in this meeting is one of advice from one who has lived long, who has studied Africa and has seen the modern world.

In this great crisis of the world's history, when standing on the highest peaks of human accomplishment we look forward to peace and backward to war, when we look up to Heaven and down to Hell, let us mince no words. We face triumph or tragedy without alternative. Africa, ancient Africa, has been called by the world and has lifted up her hands! Africa has no choice between private capitalism and socialism. The whole world, including capitalist countries, is moving towards socialism, inevitably, inexorably. You can choose between blocs of military alliance, you can choose between groups of political union; you cannot choose between socialism and private capitalism because private capitalism is doomed!

But what is socialism? It is a disciplined economy and political organisation in which the first duty of a citizen is to serve the state; and the state is not a selected aristocracy, or a group of self-seeking oligarchs who have seized wealth and power. No! The mass of workers with hand and brain are the ones whose collective destiny is the chief object of all effort. Gradually, every state is coming to this concept of its aim. The great Communist states like the Soviet Union and China have surrendered completely to this idea. The Scandinavian states have yielded partially; Britain has yielded in some respects, France in part, and even the U.S. adopted the New Deal which was largely socialism; though today further American socialism is held at bay by 60 great groups of corporations who control individual capitalists and the trade union leaders.

On the other hand, the African tribe, whence all of you sprung, was communistic in its very beginnings. No tribesman was free. All were servants of the tribe of whom the chief was father and

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voice. When now, with a certain suddenness, Africa is whirled by the bitter struggle of dying private capitalism into the last great battle-ground of its death throes, you are being tempted to adopt at least a passing private capitalism as a step to some partial socialism. This would be a grave mistake.

For four hundred years Europe and North Africa have built their civilisation and comfort on theft of coloured labour and the land and materials which rightfully belong to these colonial peoples. The dominant exploiting nations are willing to yield more to the demands of the mass of men than were their fathers. But their yielding takes the form of sharing the loot—not of stopping the looting. It takes the form of stopping socialism by force and not of surrendering the fatal mistakes of private capitalism. Either capital belongs to all or power is denied all.

Here then, my brothers, you face your great decision: Will you for temporary advantage—for automobiles, refrigerators and Paris gowns—spend your income in paying interest on borrowed funds; or will you sacrifice your present comfort and the chance to shine before your neighbours, in order to educate your children, develop such industry as best serves the great mass of people and make your country strong in ability, self-support and self-defence? Such union of effort for strength calls for sacrifice and self-denial, while the capital offered you at high price by the colonial powers like France, Britain, Holland, Belgium and the U.S., will prolong fatal colonial imperialism, from which you have suffered slavery, serfdom and colonialism.

You are not helpless. You are the buyers; and to continue existence as sellers of capital, these great nations, former owners of the world, must sell or face bankruptcy. You are not compelled to buy all they offer now. You can wait. You can starve a while longer rather than sell your great heritage for a mess of Western capitalist pottage. You can not only beat down the price of capital as offered by the united and monopolised Western private capitalists, but at last today you can compare their offers with those of socialist countries like the Soviet Union and China, which with infinite sacrifice and pouring out of blood and tears, are at last able to offer weak nations needed capital on better terms than the West.

The supply which socialist nations can at present spare is small as compared with that of the bloated monopolies of the West, but it is large and rapidly growing. Its acceptance involves no bonds

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which a free Africa may not safely assume. It certainly does not involve slavery and colonial control which the West has demanded and still demands. Today she offers a compromise, but one of which you must beware. She offers to let some of your smarter and less scrupulous leaders become fellow capitalists with the white exploiters if in turn they induce the nation's masses to pay the awful cost. This has happened in the West Indies and in South America. This may yet happen in the Middle East and Eastern Asia. Strive against it with every fibre of your bodies and souls. A body of local private capitalists, even if they are black, can never free Africa; they will simply sell it into new slavery to old masters overseas.

As I have said, this is a call for sacrifice. Great Goethe sang: '*Entbehren sollst du, sollst entbehren*': 'Thou shalt forego, shalt do without'. If Africa unites, it will be because each part, each nation, each tribe gives up a part of its heritage for the good of the whole. That is what union means: that is what Pan-Africa means. . . .

Forget nothing, but set everything in its rightful place; the glory of the six Ashanti Wars against Britain; the wisdom of the Fanti Confederation; the growth of Nigeria; the song of the Songhay and Hausa; the rebellion of the Mahdi and the hands of Ethiopia; the greatness of the Basuto and the fighting of Chaka; the revenge of Mutessi; and many other happenings and men; but above all—Africa, Mother of Men.

Your nearest friends and neighbours are the coloured people of China and India, the rest of Asia, the Middle East and the sea isles, once close bound to the heart of Africa and now long severed by the greed of Europe. Your bond is not mere colour of skin, but the deeper experience of wage slavery and contempt. So too your bond with the white world is closest to those who support and defend China and help India, and not those who exploit the Middle East and South America.

Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion! Reject the weakness of missionaries who teach neither love nor brotherhood, but chiefly the virtues of private profit from capital, stolen from your land and labour. Africa, awake! Put on the beautiful robes of Pan-African socialism. You have nothing to lose but your chains! You have a continent to regain! You have freedom and human dignity to attain!

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# CHARLES DARWIN

Clemens Dutt

THIS year marks the 150th anniversary of the birth of Charles Darwin (on February 12, 1809) and the centenary of the publication of his great work *The Origin of Species* (November, 1859). Its irrefutable arguments, based on evidence painstakingly collected during 20 years beforehand and especially his observations during the historic *Voyage of the Beagle*, completely demolished the old view that the various species of animals and plants are each the result of an independent creation and are fixed and unalterable.

Darwin's work achieved a revolution in outlook that profoundly affected many sciences besides biology. The transformation it wrought in natural history can in many respects be compared with that due to Marx and Engels in human history. His theory of evolution by natural selection provided for the first time a rational materialist explanation of the historical development of higher organisms from lower ones and of the endless diversity of living things, and so laid the basis for modern scientific biology. It is for this reason that Engels ranked the Darwinian theory as one of the three great discoveries (along with the cell and the transformation of energy) that made modern, materialist natural science possible.

It is difficult for us nowadays to realise how strongly the belief in the fixity of species was held in Darwin's time, in spite of the brilliant anticipations of Erasmus Darwin, Lamarck and others, and the growing acceptance of evolutionary views of the history of the earth and its rocks. Darwin's theory had to fight its way against the furious opposition of theologians and reactionary scientists. In particular, the necessary consequence of the evolutionary theory, that man also must have evolved from lower animals, directly contradicted religious dogmas on the creation and origin of man. Even today in the U.S.A. it is possible for a reactionary state to forbid the teaching of evolution by law.

Darwin himself stood aside from controversy. It was contrary to his nature to engage in polemics and in any case he was too busy with his observations and writings. Hence after his death, when his greatness was acknowledged by all, it was possible for Victorian piety to build up a myth that he was essentially a religious man. Yet in his short *Autobiography*, written primarily for his own family, he explains frankly how, as his views on evolution gradually matured, he gradually but completely discarded religious beliefs.

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It is typical of the way in which true pictures of the great figures of the last century have been distorted to suit conventional bourgeois notions that the myth about Darwin was perpetuated by his family censoring nearly 6,000 words of the *Autobiography* when it was first published, five years after his death.

We have had to wait the greater part of a century, until the publication last year of the full text of the *Autobiography*, for his forthright statements on religious belief to become known to the world. He wrote, for instance:

> I had gradually come to see that the Old Testament from its manifestly false history of the world . . . and from its attributing to God the feelings of a revengeful tyrant, was no more to be trusted than . . . the beliefs of any barbarian.

Declaring that his religious disbelief was now complete, Darwin continues: 'I have never since doubted even for a single second that my conclusion was correct. I can indeed hardly see how anyone ought to wish Christianity to be true; for if so . . . men who do not believe . . . will be everlastingly punished. And this is a damnable doctrine'. These declarations were suppressed on the insistence of his wife.

Mrs. Darwin even insisted on the omission of a passage about the possible dependence of religious beliefs on the inherited effect of teaching in childhood because, she said, 'Your father's opinion that all morality has grown up by evolution is painful to me'. The old edition of the *Autobiography* went so far as to delete Darwin's statement that 'everything in nature is the result of fixed laws'.

In spite of his instinctive adherence to materialism and his progressive liberal views (he vigorously condemned slavery and in his travels he noted how European colonisers had brought death and ruin to colonial populations), Darwin did not go beyond calling himself an agnostic and did not draw the far-reaching materialist conclusions that followed from his theory. For a complete contemporary appreciation of Darwin's achievement one must turn to Marx and Engels. From the outset they recognised the significance of Darwin's work.

Within three weeks of the publication of the *Origin of Species*, Engels wrote to Marx:

> In general, Darwin is excellent. . . . Until now there has been no such grand attempt to show historical development in nature, and indeed with such success.

Marx in a letter to Engels in December, 1860, said 'This book gives the scientific historical basis for our views'.

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At the same time, Marx and Engels clearly saw the basic shortcomings of Darwin's theory of evolution, due in the first place to his non-dialectical approach, the assumption that evolution proceeds smoothly and continuously without sharp changes (*natura non facit saltum*) and, secondly, to his uncritical acceptance of Malthus' reactionary population theory, which had the support of rising industrial capitalism because it justified cut-throat competition ('the survival of the fittest') and keeping workers' living standards as low as possible because otherwise they would only multiply and exhaust the food supply.

Darwin took from Malthus the idea of the 'struggle for existence' as providing the means by which natural selection takes place, favourable variations tending to be preserved and unfavourable ones to be destroyed, ultimately resulting in the production of a new species. But Marx and Engels pointed out that the laws governing populations of plant and animal species cannot be mechanically transferred to human society, or vice versa. Engels in his work *Dialectics of Nature* says: 'It is childish to sum up the whole manifold wealth of historical evolution and complexity in the meagre and one-sided phrase "struggle for existence".' He points out:

> The whole Darwinian theory of the struggle for existence is simply the transference from society to organic nature of Hobbes' theory of *bellum omnium contra omnes*, and of the bourgeois economic theory of competition. . . . When once this feat has been accomplished . . . it is very easy to transfer these theories back again from natural history to the history of society, and altogether too naive to maintain that thereby these assertions have been proved as eternal natural laws of society.
>
> (*Dialectics of Nature*, English edition, 1954, p. 404.)

The Darwinian theory of evolution not only provided a guiding idea that gave a colossal impetus to the development of various branches of natural science, but also opened up a wide field for investigating how evolution takes place. Darwin himself admitted that there was profound ignorance of the causes of variation and he simply assumed that nearly all variations are minute and that all variations are inherited. In his later years he tended increasingly to adopt the Lamarckian view of the inheritance of acquired characters as playing a part alongside the merely negative role of natural selection acting on chance variations.

Engels quite early pointed out that, while the theory of evolution had a secure basis in the geological succession of organisms,

> the theory of evolution itself is still in a very early stage and it therefore cannot be doubted that further research will greatly modify our present

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conceptions, including strictly Darwinian ones, of the process of the evolution of species. (*Anti-Dühring*, English edition, 1954, p. 106.)

Since then a vast body of facts has been accumulated. In particular, the importance of discontinuous variation, of mutations or jumps, has been shown. Wide differences of opinion still exist. Engels believed that changes in the metabolism of an organism could change its heredity. The school of Mendelian geneticists deny this but the school of Michurin and Lysenko in the U.S.S.R. adduce support for it. Both schools, however, as well as various other shades of evolutionary thought, acknowledge their debt to Darwin and are proud to call themselves Darwinists. At the end of his *Autobiography*, a document of remarkable sincerity and modesty, Darwin expresses surprise that he should have 'influenced to a considerable extent the beliefs of scientific men on some important points'. A century of Darwinism has underlined the significance of that modest claim.

# THE CHOICE FOR THE SUDAN

A. Masri

IN the Middle East the situation is once more pregnant with possibilities. The threats of colonialism, whether by military force as in Aden, Oman and Algeria, or by diplomatic pressure as exemplified by the recent visit of the American Under Secretary of State Rountree to the area, remain the principal preoccupation of the Arab people. At the same time the fight for democracy and better standards of life continues with all its difficulties. There is renewed speculation about the future development of the United Arab Republic where the internal contradictions have sharpened in recent weeks, and intense interest in Iraq where the progressive forces keep up vigilant struggle in defence of the young Republic.

Meantime in the newest of all the military dictatorships, in the Sudan, where the change of régime was carried through ten weeks ago, there is silence and no indication as yet of the clean break with the colonial past which has been the aim of the Sudanese people since political independence was achieved three years ago.

When the Sudan became independent in January, 1956, it had been under British influence for over a century including 57 years of full British control.

The British 'gifts' to the Sudan in our modern era of swift technical advance are easy to enumerate. A railway network of 2,500 miles (in an area ten times the size of Britain), the Sennar

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Dam irrigating a huge cotton plantation between the Blue Nile and the White Nile, and a British-trained army. What of the debit side, of the neglected resources and human skill? Perhaps the most damning indictment of the British colonial system was the fact that in 1956, 95 per cent of the 10 million Sudanese were completely illiterate. Education had been strictly rationed to a small section needed to help run the railways and the civil service. Industry was non-existent, except for Army and railway workshops; the mineral resources were untapped and uncharted.

As in the case of all newly liberated countries, economic independence did not automatically come about with political independence. In the Sudan, it still has to be fought for and to be won. The new régime came to power last November as the Sudanese people were preparing to enter this most important battle.

The coup d'etat of General Abboud displaced a government that had become increasingly unpopular and was about to die a natural death. A Coalition Cabinet had been in power for most of the three years of independence, led by a party of big landowners, the Umma party, which by promising a nationalist policy had gained a large vote—though not a majority vote—as well as the support of a centre party, the People's Democratic Party. In practice, however, its policy had the main characteristics of the policy of the big land-owning class in ex-colonial countries: preservation of the old order and disguised hostility to the aspirations of the nationalist movement. Its achievements were few, and it may be said that no spectacular progress could have been made in three short years. But in the Middle East today things are going fast and the government of Abdallah Khalil had the misfortune of starting on its conservative career at the precise moment when in other Arab countries the anti-imperialist struggle was coming to a head.

It had been in existence for only a few days when Egypt nationalised the Suez Canal Company on July 26, 1956. Eden's threats to Egypt were understood by the Sudanese for what they were: threats to every ex-colonial country trying to proclaim its full independence. A spontaneous solidarity movement with Egypt grew during that summer, and when Eden's threats materialised into barefaced aggression, hundreds of Sudanese volunteers were ready to join Egypt's battle for the Canal. The whole country was swept by a violent wave of hatred for the colonialists and all who stood for them. The defeat of the aggression against Egypt brought with it in the Sudan, as everywhere in Africa and Asia, a realisation of

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the power of the new forces of liberation when they act in unity as they did in November, 1956.

Immediately after the withdrawal of the British troops from Egypt came the now defunct Eisenhower doctrine—America's attempt to buy her way into Britain's shoes. Dollars were offered in return for a military alliance in the Middle East: should not the representatives of the old order be eager to accept, conscious as they were of the danger to their own positions? Whether eager or hesitant, most of them dared not accept. The Khalil government politely declined, relying on its British connection but wondering already whether the traditional methods would help to solve the growing economic difficulties.

Colonialism always distorts the economy of a subjected country to serve its own needs. When its needs change, however, the burden of economic subjection quickly sharpens into an acute crisis. Like Egypt before it, the Sudan under British control had become a supplier of raw cotton to Lancashire, depending on cotton exports for 70 per cent of its foreign revenues. In 1957, it had to be admitted that Britain's textile mills no longer required the same large quantities; they had their own crisis: and besides, American surplus cotton was being dumped in Britain and Western Europe in increasing quantities. Unsold cotton has been piling up in the Sudan in the last two years, despite reduced prices, and frantic efforts are now being made to dispose of the stocks from the last two seasons.

The results of the failure to sell their cotton have been disastrous for the Sudanese. Government revenue and personal incomes are falling steadily, the development programme has had to be curtailed, restrictions on imports have been introduced causing a steady rise in prices since, for lack of industries, essential goods such as sugar, textiles and paper, have to be imported.

Egypt solved the problem of the vanishing capitalist markets for her cotton by turning to the Socialist markets, and not only selling her cotton but in return getting the long-needed industrial equipment for her new industries. In summer 1957, a Soviet offer to conclude a trade agreement with the Sudan remained unanswered by the Khalil government. In March, 1958, an American offer of economic aid was however accepted.

Khalil's decision to join the circle of 'American Aid' countries instead of expanding economic relations with the Socialist world was denounced in street demonstrations and in Parliament. His claim that the American offer was without strings was ignored in the country, especially as it was quickly followed by undisguised

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acts of hostility towards Egypt and by the virtual cessation of economic relations with the United Arab Republic. The unnatural enmity between the two parts of the Nile valley was understood quite correctly as serving only the interests of the enemies of the common aim of independence, a diversion from Sudan's problems.

The American alignment was also seen as a contributing factor to the new attacks against the Sudanese trade union movement. The Sudan Workers' Trade Union Federation, in existence for about ten years, was suddenly told that it had no legal status, and a Magistrate's Court was asked by the government to declare it illegal. The government's case was dismissed, but its intentions had become clear. A one-day general strike and mass demonstrations left little doubt on the unpopularity of the Umma party.

By November, it was clear that the Khalil government could not keep in power much longer. One of the Coalition parties joined the National Unionist opposition in asking for immediate negotiations with Egypt and for a national policy unhampered by political or economic strings. For a few days it seemed that Khalil was about to give way: he announced that he would form a new and enlarged government; he agreed to start negotiations with Egypt. Within the week, he quietly ceded power to the Army leaders.

The men of the new régime have gained some support by finally recognising the Chinese People's Republic and allowing the first trade exchanges with Socialist countries. But they have not given any other indication of a new departure, nor have they aligned themselves with the forces of national liberation internally or in neighbouring countries. The Sudan was the one independent African state which sent no delegate to the All African People's Conference at Accra last December. The Abboud Government has outlawed the Trades Union Federation and the Anti-Imperialist Front, banned the latter's newspaper, arrested their leaders and suppressed all trade union activity, whilst it has confirmed its acceptance of the American aid agreement.

A few days after the military take-over, the ex-Prime Minister Abdallah Khalil told a Lebanese newspaper correspondent that he knew beforehand of General Abboud's coup and approved it. His hopes and those of the Umma are that the new régime will continue their policy, only with better chances of success. But no government can be successful in the Sudan today unless it can offer a truly national policy which, by ending colonialist control, will allow them to develop freely their own economy and to chart their own road to progress without foreign interference.

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# FAREWELL TO THE COMMUNE

## David Crook ends his diary

*October 30, 1958.* Telling people about last night's visit from the ex-company commander I found there was another ex-guerrilla commander in the village and went to visit him with a group of students after supper. A veteran of 66 who operated locally in the militia in co-operation with the 8th Route Army but not as a member of it. A natural born story teller—and with what stories of battles against the Japanese; of talking and terrorising the local puppet troops into lending arms to the guerrillas at night.

*November 1.* No mountaineering today. The whole battalion was invited to a meeting of the Communist Party branch of the English Department. A young teacher's application for membership was considered. Joining the party is no mere matter of form filling. In the end the applicant, who comes from a bourgeois family and whose brother was a rightist in the recent rectification campaign, was unanimously accepted as a candidate member. In a year a similar meeting will be held to examine his record, and if he passes he will become a full member. Towards the end of the meeting the two vice-presidents of the Institute arrived on a visit to us from Peking. One made a speech—an apparently unprepared effort, with plenty of humour, presented with that eloquence and logic so conspicuous among Chinese leaders at all levels. He spoke first of his feelings on arriving in the mountain village, which reminded him of days spent in similar old guerilla bases during the war against Japan. He had worked part of the time, incidentally, with the Canadian surgeon Norman Bethune. Then he went on to report on the progress in steel-making by those left behind at the Institute. And finally he talked of the value of combining education with productive labour. The day was rounded off by rehearsal for tomorrow's concert.

*November 2.* Back from the day's planting slightly earlier than usual to discuss 'What is the right attitude to have towards the work we're doing?'—in the light of yesterday's political meetings. The main points brought out were the need to work conscientiously and collectively, grasping the full social, political and economic implications of the job, and not regarding it as a mere routine task or being motivated by a desire for personal prestige. It is undoubtedly this sort of intensive ideological work which is at the bottom of China's great achievements these days—a question of

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'theory becoming a material force once it grips the masses'. The concert was held in the beaten mud quadrangle between the primary school and the stables, mules and donkeys peering out of their stalls behind the stage. Singing, dancing, short skits and dialogues. The old men and women of the village not only enjoyed the fun but appreciated being escorted to and from the concert by the students staying in their courtyards.

*November 3.* We started digging long, level pits for mulberry trees today. Silk worms will be bred in the village. How long will it be before the railway down in the valley will be carrying silk to Ulan Bator and points west?

*November 4.* Our first rainy day; and only drizzle at that. Just this little bit of moisture transformed the arid countryside. Climbing up beside the becks and gills I thought of the Lakes and the Yorkshire dales which I toured this summer at the end of my leave home in England. It occurred to me that this was not the first time I had climbed hills; but it was the first time I had ever done so for any reason other than the fun of it.

*November 5.* As we reached the foot of the mountain on our way back from work today we met two jolly old greybeards coming down the steep path, chattering away, lively as crickets despite the weight of enormous baskets on their backs piled high with maize and sorghum. Our group leader, a girl, immediately called out: 'Let us help you carry your baskets, grand-dads'. At first the old men simply pooh-poohed the idea. They had been used to this sort of thing all their lives, they said. But at last we prevailed on them and one of my students and I shouldered the loads. I don't know how much those baskets weighed; not much less than I do, I would guess, and I'm no featherweight. We were soon red in the face and sweating freely despite the cool wind. I marvelled at the strength, endurance and will-power of those old men—they turned out to be 72 and 74. I thought of the hardships they must have endured from childhood to be able to bear such burdens in old age. They had survived it all, to these days of liberation.

*November 6.* Tonight our group held a discussion. 'What is the role of physical labour in ideological remoulding? What sort of attitude should we have towards labour? What do we actually feel about it? What have we (intellectuals) to learn from the labouring people? etc., etc.' You can remould yourself through labour, was the general conclusion, but it is not an automatic process. You have got to use your brain as well as brawn, make a conscious effort to grasp the fullest social implications, for the past

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and future, of the work you do. Or in the stock phrase, you must engage in ideological struggle. And this has in fact revolved as much around the simple living as the hard work. I personally have never eaten so much grain and cabbage and so little meat for so long a time. It would not help us to reach close unity with the farmers if we ate conspicuously better than they. The main things to be learnt from the farmers, most people thought, were their industriousness, endurance, austerity and class consciousness. I myself would hold no brief for the perpetuation of the austerity. It is a fact forced on the people by history. We share it to end it. But it helps explain the trouncing the Americans got in Korea. For all their mechanisation they folded up when cut off from their ice-cream and PX, while the Chinese, unworried by lack of aircraft and motorisation in the early days, scurried indomitably over the mountains—on a diet of millet and sweet potatoes.

*November 7.* Our last day of work in the hills. We teachers knocked off a couple of hours early to get back for a meeting in preparation for the resumption of teaching. We go back to the Institute the day after tomorrow. There was a rehearsal for a farewell concert going on in the usual meeting place, so we moved out to the dry stream bed where we have breakfast and supper. But it was out of the frying-pan. First we were interrupted—or intercepted?—by the passage of a herd of goats. Then the commune intercom started to blare forth announcements. But we got settled at last and summed up our experiences of teaching English in this unacademic environment. The summary was essential for we shall be back here more than once in the next couple of years. And there is talk of working at mines and steel works too. So the notion that you can't do effective language study under such conditions was—and had to be—roundly refuted. *People's Daily* had banner headlines in red in both Chinese and Russian, hailing the 41st anniversary of the Bolshevik revolution today. Our more artistically inclined students have started painting murals on the newly white-washed walls of the village houses. They deal mostly with the shape of the An Chuang to come—three-storey buildings, power lines, cultural palaces, bumper harvests, unimaginably fat pigs, farmers driving streamlined cars. Common symbols are sputniks and rockets; ballistic ears of wheat soaring over the mountains and so on. To send up a sputnik has become a common figure of speech meaning to launch a special endeavour in any field—industry, agriculture, sport, study, etc.

*November 8.* We return to Peking tomorrow. so today has been

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spent summarising our work here and winding things up. The whole outfit met after breakfast on the bluff overlooking the village to hear the summing up. It was made by the C.P. secretary but based on reports from all the work groups, investigation made by the whole C.P. branch, headquarters staff, etc. There were four main headings: *1. Work done:* in 15 days' work in the hills the 300 odd of us have dug 16,334 'fish-scale' pits and 9,175 metres of level strip pits. And we have sown 26,292 mulberry seedlings, 93,960 apricots, 22,129 walnuts, 24,047 chestnuts. (These last were, I believe, introduced into China from Italy by Marco Polo, who took back in return Chinese noodles, which have evolved—or retrogressed—into spaghetti.) *2. Mass work:* 25 students gave classes in the evenings, teaching the farmers the three R's, etc.—and incidentally learning a lot from them; we did a day's sweet potato harvesting and one night shift besides the daily chores of carrying water, splitting wood, sweeping courtyards and streets, etc., the artists plan to complete a hundred murals before they leave. *3. Language study:* There have been some shortcomings in this, due to lack of conviction and of planning, but by and large we have had one 45-minute class every day. *4. Ideological and political work:* points dealt with were: the role of physical labour in the ideological remoulding of intellectuals; revealing intellectuals' weaknesses, their attitude to labour and labouring people, etc. The solution lies in changing old habits, breaking down barriers between mental and physical labour, between theory and practice. By fusing oneself with the people, sharing their life, and work and struggles. Theory alone cannot solve the problem. An important by-product will be the widening of horizons (vital for future translators and interpreters) and the improvement of physique. We made progress in our attitude to labour but can't be complacent, for there is still a contradiction between our thoughts and feelings, still mental struggle, fear of fatigue, distaste for hardship, fastidiousness, etc. It was good to hear all this with the image in mind of the long-nailed, long-gowned, ivory-tower Chinese intellectual of the recent past. And I was struck by the comment that the literacy work done was no bestowal of gifts but a repayment of debts to the peasantry whose labour had provided the intellectuals not only with education but with life itself for untold generations. The 'cultural squads' gave our farewell concert tonight; more polished and better costumed than the last, which, like every action in China these days, had been critically summed-up and analysed. But the main advance was drawing in more local talent. This time, besides

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the school kids there was the local bard—a man of about 60—who reeled off humorous rhymes and patter, some of it traditional folk stuff, some composed specially for the occasion and some obviously ad lib.

*November 9.* Up at 5 for a busy last day, packing, spring cleaning the whole village, a final filling of water crocks, etc. And one special job, too. The last group of students here had laid a longish water-pipe from a mountain stream to the centre of the village. We took on the job of insulating it with straw to prevent freezing during the winter. Meat for lunch—not just a few wafer-like slivers for seasoning but great gobs of it. We had just swallowed the first mouthful when the word came: quick, all bedding rolls are to be assembled immediately at the east end of the village. A wistful look at the steaming stew and then a stampede. We might have guessed. The commune had placed every one of its draft animals at our disposal, with driver, to carry all our heavy loads the mile and a half to the station. It took four trips and even then the last few bundles were carried the whole way for us, 60-year-old men adamantly refusing to set down their burdens. Before leaving I managed to have quite a chat with three of the villagers. They wanted especially to thank us foreigners for taking part in the work, they said. Then I managed to steer them on to their guerilla fighting days, the formation of the underground CP branch in the early '40s, the 'day and night' village governments of those days (puppet by day, anti-Japanese by night). Absolutely the whole village turned out to see us off. The old woman in our courtyard wept; the old man thrust a package of apricot kernels on us, the kids clutched our hands; even the Young Pioneers sniffled until told that such conduct was unsuited to red scarf wearers. There was nothing to say except goodbye and we'll come again; come to see us in Peking. I thought I had experienced nothing like it—until I thought back 21 years, to the day we left the village of Madrigueras, where we trained for 6 weeks before moving off in February, 1937, for the battle of Jarama. I saw again the old Spanish woman who wept as she thrust oranges into my hands.

We reached Peking's Westward Gate Station after 9 p.m. Then the four-mile march back to the Institute, singing. A riotous welcome with firecrackers at the school gates, a speech of welcome by the vice-president who had visited us in the hills and finally a great shout in unison from 320 voices: 'We've finished our forestation task, give us our next assignment'. That is the spirit of China today. It is summed up in the words 'continuous revolution'.

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*(Continued from page ii of cover)*

lists, 'critical' columnists of 'Left' weeklies, too late to shower patronage on the New China, too deep in cold war prejudices to recognise a changed world.

Amongst 'the younger generation', whose viewpoint and actions make them people of today and tomorrow, is that wonderful Negro scholar, W. E. B. DuBois, whose inspiring address to the peoples of Africa at Accra we print on page 81. It includes Charles Darwin, born 150 years ago this month on the same day as 'the Great Emancipator', Abraham Lincoln, no less than the contemporary representative of Coventry motor industry workers, who writes on shop stewards today. It includes our readers, not least those Labour Party members who write interesting letters about what should be done to rally the Left and put heart in the people and socialism into their thoughts and actions. It includes, too, that man of the future, friend and chosen defender of colonial peoples everywhere, D. N. Pritt, Q.C., about whose recent reminiscences of the Reichstag Fire Trial a Channel Islander wrote: 'My thanks to D. N. Pritt for doing what he did at the time of the Reichstag Fire Trial. I was 12 then and just beginning to try to understand what the school called "Current Affairs". But though I was told about Hitler and what he was trying to do for the good of Germany—against the Bolsheviks!—I was not told about Mr. Pritt's exposure. I remember how, a little later on, I loathed the gutter press for putting Mr. Pritt in the stocks when he revealed the German plan for using Finland against Russia. Then the war was really on, and we heard on our radio that the Germans were advancing across France. Next they were in the Channel Islands and our turn had come.' How much farther forward, yet on the same road, are we and this working class schoolboy than the boys in the Tower of 1796! How fleeting the influence and certain the defeat of the outmoded men and ideas of the past! With our readers' help in winning more circulation we hope to make L.M. in 1959 more what a Sussex man claims it is already: 'A magnificent paper, vital to one's equipment in the long battle for a better world'. December donations totalled:

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